

The Pipeline

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Dragons slain in Bowling Green; others lurk

By Cary B. Willis

BOWLING GREEN – They arrived wanting to know what connection dragons could possibly have to their work, and they left having eagerly slain a few of the dreaded beasts.

Approximately 140 employees of the Cabinet for Families and Children's Central Office in Frankfort – joined by facilitators from offices all over Kentucky – attended a two-day conference in Bowling Green Nov. 9 and 10 to take a fresh look at team-building. Leadership dubbed it the "Dragon Slayer Conference" in reference to "HeroZ," a book that uses a humorous allegory of castles and dragons to explain the work world.

The Bowling Green conference was not your typical package of lectures and overheads. How many conferences have you attended that included a fog machine, a strobe light, a 10-foot-long dragon, and scenes and sound effects from such cultural icons as "Home Improvement," Monty Python and Rocky & Bullwinkle? A skit by the CFC Players, "The Castle for Families and Children," told the tale of castle-dwellers (better known as Cabinet staff) mired in the fog of inefficiency and obsolescence. Eventually, through a combination of teamwork, open-mindedness and bad puns ("we keep *dragon* our heels," for example) the castle inhabitants were able to see through the fog to a better way of serving customers.

Over the two days, participants broke into 15 teams and tried to name the "dragons" that get in the way of effective work. Among the dragons identified were: bad attitude, miscommunication, the approaching "brain drain" of large-scale retirements, unclear lines of responsibility, fear of accountability, bureaucracy, inadequate training, and resistance to change. Participants then discussed ways of battling such problems.



Near the close of the conference, one staff person from each team fired an arrow into the heart of the foam-cutout dragon, symbolizing the defeat of each of the Cabinet's obstacles. The goal was to enable staff to see how they can think beyond their specific jobs and be part of a larger team in which everyone is a dragon-slayer.?

Handle Food Properly to Avoid Poisoning from Thanksgiving Meal

By Kim Brannock

Thanksgiving dinner should be an enjoyable time, but it can become a disaster when the food is not handled properly and guests become sick.

If you are planning a traditional Thanksgiving feast this year, keep the occasion safe and fun by preparing, cooking and storing food according to recommended guidelines, says Guy Delius, food safety consultant in the Department for Public Health.

"There are a lot of common mistakes that people make that can lead to food poisoning: for example, not properly washing items, not correctly storing food and not cooking meats thoroughly," Delius said.

While it's important to handle food properly at all times, holiday foods need special care because people are preparing more food than usual, and more than one person may be cooking in the kitchen. Also, food is often transported and people eat leftovers for days.

"Healthy people may have only mild reactions to mishandled food," Delius said. "But young children, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems may have severe problems."

Symptoms associated with food-borne illnesses include nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, headache and severe exhaustion.

"Food should be promptly refrigerated for safety," Delius said. "It's easy to forget how long food has been out and eat it. This can be a hazardous situation."

There really is life on MARS

By Cary B. Willis

The big, shiny, powerful, all-new, statewide computer system known as MARS continues to grow arms and legs as it ambles toward its birth date of July 1, 1999.

Although at this point MARS means more work for many of us, eventually the new system will make our lives simpler, as we gain flexibility, versatility and uniformity across what are now multiple, outdated administrative systems.

Among the goals of MARS (the Management and Administrative Reporting System) are:

- Improved ease of use
- Automation of cumbersome manual processes
- Replacement of many paper-based processes with electronics
- Improved management reporting
- Streamlined financial and materials management
- Reduced maintenance effort and cost
- Expanded use of "electronic commerce," and
- Better service to customers of the commonwealth.



To succeed, MARS implementation must be accompanied by adequate information and training, and anyone who needs either will be given the opportunity. Everyone will be affected in one way or another, but those whose work will be most profoundly affected are managers and supervisors, people involved with accounts receivable, imprest cash and budgeting, pro-card administrators, buyers and timekeepers.

If you need basic personal-computer training, you may want to go ahead and schedule a class or two with the Department for Information Systems at (502) 573-3924. Prerequisite MARS training includes Basic Introduction to Computers, Windows 95, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, E-mail, and Internet.

You can get quite a bit of information about MARS by checking out the MARS web site at <http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/adm/mars/mars.htm>. Be forewarned, however, that much of it reads like a college physics textbook. ?

We will be letting you know more about MARS in future issues of Pipeline. In the meantime, if you need information, contact your "Agency Implementation Lead" (a fancy title for the person in charge of this thing). For the Cabinet for Families and Children, it's Susan Thurman; Miles Murphy is in charge for the Cabinet for Health Services.?

Franklin County Electronic Tax Filing



Electronic filing for the 1998 tax year will be offered to the employees of the Cabinet for Families and Children and their immediate family members who live or work in Franklin County. Starting Feb. 1, 1999, you can call the Office of Program Support for an appointment to bring your completed tax returns in for processing. Be sure to inform your timekeeper of new or changed addresses as soon as possible so you can get your W2s promptly. Call Fay Klessig at 564-7770 with questions about this procedure. Watch the Pipeline for more information as the tax season approaches.?

Central Office Notes and Activities

- ✓ **The holidays are upon us**, and it is time for everyone to get back into aerobics. The program meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 5 p.m. in the CHR cafeteria. If you have questions, call Beth Bates at 564-7736.
- ✓ **The International Association of Personnel in Employment Security (IAPES) is sponsoring a Thanksgiving Campaign** through Nov. 26 to collect items for the "Access" Soup Kitchen and Men's Shelter here in Frankfort. Collection boxes are in the lobby and on the second floor by the escalator. Contact Suzanne Wallace at 564-2420 or M-ie (pronounced Emmie) Sloan at 564-3240 for additional information.

Sick Time Needed

Donated sick time is being requested for Robin Gorman, who is ill. Robin is an employee of Public Health. If you have questions, or would like to donate time, please call Bill Irvine at 564-2157.



Pipeline, a weekly newsletter for employees of the Cabinets for Families and Children and Health Services, welcomes reader comments and contributions. Items for *Pipeline* are due by 4:30 p.m. Tuesday; items for intercom announcements are due by 4:30 p.m. Monday. Call (502) 564-6786 or send information to Patricia Loman at ploman@mail.state.ky.us.